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General

Tuvalu, an island group consisting of nine coral atolls, is an independent nation within the British Commonwealth.

Only eight of the low-lying atolls, or coral islands, are permanently inhabited.

They are located in the South Pacific Ocean between 5°S and 10°S, and 176°E and 180°E. The islands are Nanumea, Nanumanga, Niutao, Nui, Vaitupu, Nukufetau, Funafuti, Nukulaelae, and Niulakita.

Nanumanga and Niulakita are atolls, consisting of solid masses of limestone with fringe reefs. The latter is regarded as part of Niutao. The islands extend for a distance of 360 miles in a NW to SE direction and cover an area of about half a million square miles of ocean. The administrative center is situated at Fongafale on the largest and E most islet of the atoll. The airstrip is also situated on that islet. The atoll is the only reported port of entry for Tuvalu.

The climate is tropical and moderated by E trade winds which run from March to November. There are W gales and heavy rains from November to March.

The terrain is low-lying, with many narrow coral atolls.

Buoyage System

The IALA Buoyage System (Region A) is in effect. See Chart No. 1 for further IALA Buoyage System information.

Currency

The official unit of currency is the Australian dollar, consisting of 100 cents.

Government

Tuvalu is a democratic government. Tuvalu's Constitution provides for a Chief Minister and two other Ministers to be elected from the 12 members of the House of Parliament.

Local government services are provided by an elected Island Council on each of the eight atolls. The capital is Funafuti.

Holidays

The following holidays are observed:

January 1, New Year's Day; Good Friday; Easter Monday; July 12, Independence Day; August 4, Youth Day; December 10, Human Rights Day; December 25, Christmas Day; and December 26, Boxing Day.

Industries

The main industries are fishing, tourism, and copra.

Languages

The official languages of Tuvalu are Tuvaluan and English.

Time Zone

The Time Zone description is MIKE (-12).

U.S. Embassy

There are no U.S. diplomatic offices. The U.S. ambassador to Fiji is accredited to Tuvalu.